

The Prodigal Village

By Irving Bacheller

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PHYLLIS BING.

Synopsis.—In the village of Bingville thirteen-year-old Robert Emmet Moran, crippled son of a poor widow, is known as the Shepherd of the Birds. His world is his mother and friends, his little room, the flower garden of Judge Crooker, and every flying thing he sees from his window. The painting of pictures is his enjoyment, and little Pauline Baker, small daughter of a neighbor, the object of his boyish affection. To him, J. Patterson Bing, the first citizen of Bingville, is the ideal of a really great man. The village becomes money mad, reflecting the great world in its state of unrest. The Bing family is a leader in the change. To them the village has become "provincial." The butcher and baker and candlestick-maker all raise their prices. Even Hiram Blenkinsop, the town drunkard, works hard for a month. The Old Spirit of Bingville is summarily fired. The first citizen builds an addition to his mansion.

CHAPTER TWO—Continued.

Israel Sneed, the plumber, was working with his men on a job at Millerton, but he took on the plumbing for the Bing house extension, at prices above all precedent, to be done as soon as he could get to it on his return. The butcher and grocer had improved the opportunity to raise their prices, for Bing never questioned a bill. He set the pace. Prices stuck where he put the peg. So, unwittingly, the millionaire had created conditions of life that were extremely difficult.

Since prices had gone up the village of Bingville had been running down at the heel. It had been at best and, in the main, a rather shiftless and inert community. The weather had worn the paint off many houses before their owners had seen the need of repainting. Not until the rain drummed on the floor was the average, drowsy intellect of Bingville roused to action on the roof. It must be said, however, that every one was busy, every day, except Hiram Blenkinsop, who often indulged in ante mortem slumbers in the graveyard or went out on the river with his dog Christmas, his bottle and his fishing rod. The people were selling goods, or teaming, or working in the two hotels or the machine shop or the electric light plant or the mill, or keeping the hay off the lawns, or building, or teaching in the schools. The gardens were largely dependent on the spasmodic industry of schoolboys and old men. So it will be seen that the work of the community had little effect on the supply of things necessary to life. Indeed, a general habit of extravagance had been growing in the village. People were not so careful of food, fuel and clothing as they had been.

It was a wet summer in Bingville. The day after the rains began, Professor Renfrew called at the house of the snuffy Snodgrass—the nouveau riche and opulent carpenter. He sat reading the morning paper with a new diamond ring on the third finger of his left hand.

"My roof is leaking badly and it will have to be fixed at once," the professor announced.

"I'm sorry, I can't do a thing for you now," said Snodgrass. "I've got so much to do, I don't know which way to turn."

"But you're not working this rainy day, are you?" the professor asked.

"No, and I don't propose to work in this rain for anybody; if I did I'd fix my own roof. To tell you the truth, I don't have to work at all! I calculate that I've got all the money I need. So, when it rains, I intend to rest and get acquainted with my family."

He was firm but in no way disagreeable about it.

Some of the half-dozen men who, in like trouble, called on him for help that day were inclined to resent his declaration of independence and his devotion to leisure, but really Mr. Snodgrass was well within his rights.

It was a more serious matter when Judge Crooker's plumbing leaked and flooded his kitchen and cellar. Israel Sneed was in Millerton every day and working overtime more or less. He refused to put a hand on the judge's pipes. He was sorry but he couldn't make a horse of himself and even if he could the time was past when he had to do it. Judge Crooker brought a plumber from Hazelmead, sixty miles in a motorcar, and had to pay seventy dollars for time, labor and materials. This mechanic declared that there was too much pressure on the pipes, a judgment of whose accuracy we have abundant proof in the

history of the next week or so. Never had there been such a bursting of pipes and flooding of cellars. That little lake up in the hills which supplied the water of Bingville seemed to have got the common notion of moving into the village. A dozen cellars were turned into swimming pools. Modern improvements were going out of commission. A committee went to Hazelmead and after a week's pleading got a pair of young and inexperienced plumbers to come to Bingville.

"They must 'a' plugged 'em with gold," said Deacon Hosley, when the bill arrived.

New leaks were forthcoming, but Hiram Blenkinsop conceived the notion of stopping them with poultices of white lead and bandages of canvas bound with fine wire. They dripped and many of the pipes of Bingville looked as if they were suffering from sprained ankles and sore throats, but Hiram had prevented another deluge.

The price of coal had driven the people of Bingville back to the woods for fuel. The old wood stoves had been cleaned and set up in the sitting rooms and kitchens. The saving had been considerable. Now, so many men were putting in their time on the house and grounds of J. Patterson Bing and the new factory at Millerton that the local wood dealer found it impossible to get the help he needed. Not twenty-five per cent of the orders on his books could be filled.

Mr. Bing's house was finished in October. Then Snodgrass announced that he was going to take it easy, as became a man of his opulence. He had bought a farm and would only work three days a week at his trade. Sneed had also bought a farm and acquired a feeling of opulence. He was going to work when he felt like it. Before he tackled any leaking pipes he proposed to make a few leaks in the deer up in the Adirondacks. So the roofs and the plumbing had to wait.

Meanwhile, Bingville was in sore trouble. The ancient roof of its respectability had begun to leak. The beams and rafters in the house of its spirit were rotting away. Many of the inhabitants of the latter regarded the great J. Patterson Bing with a kind of awe—like that of the Shepherd of the Birds. He was the leading citizen. He had done things. When J. Patterson Bing decided that rest or fresh air was better for him than bad music and dull prayers and sermons, and that God was really not much concerned as to whether a man sat in a pew or a rocking chair or a motorcar on Sunday, he was, probably, quite right. Really, it was a matter much more important to Mr. Bing and his neighbors than to God. Indeed, it is not at all likely that the ruler of the universe was worrying much about them. But when J. Patterson Bing decided in favor of fun and fresh air, R. Purdy—druggist—made a like decision, and R. Purdy was a man of commanding influence in his own home. His daughters, Mabel and Gladys, and his son, Richard, Jr., would not have been surprised to see him elected President of the United States, some day, believing that the honor was only for the truly great. Soon Mrs. Purdy stood alone—a hopeless minority of one—in the household. By much pleading and nagging, she kept the children in the fold of the church for a time but, by and by, grew weary of the effort. She was converted by nervous exhaustion to the picnic Sunday. Her conscience worried her. She really felt sorry for God and made sundry remarks calculated to appease and comfort Him.

Now, all this would seem to have been in itself a matter of slight importance. But Orville Gates, the superintendent of the mill, and John Seaver, attorney at law, and Robert Brown, the grocer, and Pendleton Ames, who kept the book and stationery store, and William Ferguson, the clothier, and Darwin Sill, the butcher, and Snodgrass, the carpenter, and others had joined the picnic caravan led by the millionaire. These good people would not have admitted it, but the truth is J. Patterson Bing held them all in the hollow of his hand. Nobody outside his own family had any affection for him. Outwardly, he was as hard as nails. But he owned the bank and controlled credits and was an extravagant buyer. He had given freely for the improvement of the village and the neighboring city of Hazelmead. His family was the court circle of Bingville. Consciously or unconsciously, the best people imitated the Bings.

Judge Crooker was, one day, discussing with a friend the social conditions of Bingville. In regard to picnic

Sundays he made this remark: "George Meredith once wrote to his son that he would need the help of religion to get safely beyond the stormy passions of youth. It is very true!"

The historian was reminded of this saying by the undertow of the life currents in Bingville.

The dances in the Normal school and in the homes of the well-to-do were imitations of the great party at J. Patterson Bing's. The costumes of certain of the young ladies were, to quote a clause from the posters of the Messrs. Barnum and Bailey, still clinging to the billboard: "the most daring and amazing bareback performances in the history of the circus ring." Phyllis Bing, the unrivaled metropolitan performer, set the pace. It was distinctly too rapid for her followers. If one may say it kindly, she was as cold and heartless and beautiful in her act as a piece of bronze or Italian marble. She was not ashamed of herself. She did it so easily and gracefully and unconsciously and obligingly, so to speak, as if her license had never been questioned. It was not so with Vivian Mead and Frances Smith and Pauline Baker. They limped and struggled in their efforts to keep up. To begin with, the art of their modiste had been fussy, imitative and timid. It lacked the master touch. Their spirits were also improperly prepared for such publicity. They blushed and looked apologies and were visibly uncomfortable when they entered the dance hall.

On this point, Judge Crooker delivered a famous opinion. It was: "I feel sorry for those girls, but their mothers ought to be spanked!"

There is evidence that this sentence of his was carried out in due time and in a most effectual manner. But the



"We Never Tell Father Anything—Men Don't Understand."

works of art which these mothers had put on exhibition at the Normal school sprang into overwhelming popularity with the young men and their cards were quickly filled. In half an hour, they had ceased to blush. Their eyes no longer spoke apologies. They were new women. Their initiation was complete. They had become, in the language of Judge Crooker, "perfect Phyllistines!"

The dancing tried to be as naughty as that remarkable Phyllistinesian pastime at the mansion of the Bings and succeeded well, if not handsomely. The modern dances and dress were now definitely established in Bingville.

Just before the holidays, the extension of the ample home of the millionaire was decorated, furnished and ready to be shown. Mrs. Bing and Phyllis, who had been having a fling in New York, came home for the holidays. John arrived the next day from his great Pendleton school to be with the family through the winter recess. Mrs. Bing gave a tea to the ladies of Bingville. She wanted them to see the improvements and become aware of her good will. She had thought of an evening party, but there were many men in the village whom she didn't care to have in her house. So it became a tea.

The women talked of leaking roofs

and water pipes and useless bathrooms and outrageous costs. Phyllis sat in the palm room with the village girls. It happened that they talked mainly about their fathers. Some had complained of paternal strictness.

"Men are terrible! They make so much trouble," said Frances Smith. "It seems as if they hated to see anybody have a good time."

"Mother and I do as we please and say nothing," said Phyllis. "We never tell father anything—men don't understand."

Some of the girls smiled and looked into one another's eyes.

There had been a curious undercurrent in the party. It did not break the surface of the stream until Mrs. Bing asked Mrs. Pendleton Ames, "Where is Pauline Baker?"

A silence fell upon the group around her.

Mrs. Ames leaned toward Mrs. Bing and whispered, "Haven't you heard the news?"

"No. I had to scold Susan Crowder and Martha Featherstraw as soon as I got here for neglecting their work and they've badly spoken to me since. What is it?"

"Pauline Baker has run away with a strange young man," Mrs. Ames whispered.

Mrs. Bing threw up both hands, opened her mouth and looked toward the ceiling.

"You don't mean it!" she gasped.

"Don't tell father!"

(TO BE CONTINUED.)

CATFISH CLIMB SMOOTH WALL.

Certain Species Equipped With a Peculiar Suction Apparatus That Makes Feat Really Easy.

An interesting account of the climbing catfish of Colombia (*Arges marmoratus*) was published a few years ago by R. D. O. Johnson. These fish can climb, by means of suction apparatus, not only up the steeply inclined bed of mountain torrent, but even up a smooth, vertical surface. Mr. Johnson saw some of them climb a vertical distance of 18 feet in half an hour, up a wall of rock over which trickled a thin film of water.

In connection with a recent publication of this article, G. K. Noble states that other species of fish are known to climb in the same manner. Several of these occur in the Himalaya. *Nemachilus rupicola*, and perhaps other species of mountain cyprinids, adhere to the rocks by means of their smooth ventral skin and enlarged lips. The silurid genera *Pseudochanna* and *Glyptosternum* cling by means of a well-developed abdominal sucker.

The mountain torrents of the Himalaya form the nursery for many species of frogs. Their tadpoles, like the fish, have become adapted to their location; some cling by means of their lips and ventral musculature, while others possess a well-developed ventral sucker.—Scientific American.

Armenia First Christian Nation.

The Armenians are an Aryan race and probably emigrated from Europe into Asia Minor centuries before the Christian era. Their language belongs to the Indo-European group of languages. Their king was converted to Christianity as early as 801 A. D., and Armenia then became the first Christian nation of the world. The Armenian civilization has been established for centuries. The position of the country on the highway between Asia and Europe has subjected it to invasion and subjugation at various periods by the Assyrians, Medes, Greeks, Romans, Persians and Turks. From the Fourteenth century to the late war, the greatest part of Armenia was under Turkish rule. Their enmity to the Turks rises from their struggles as a nation to be free, which have frequently been accompanied by massacres of Armenians. America's interest arises from sympathy with an oppressed race that has for so long upheld Christian civilization in the Near East.

Served Him Right.

"The average American may have a nasal accent," said Myron T. Herlick, at a dinner in Cleveland, "but at least he doesn't ape the accent of the English. Is there anything so terrible as an American trying to put on English accent—trying to pretend that he's an English swell?"

"An American of this type got lost in the Strand one day, and he sauntered up to a bobble and said:

"I say, me mahn, don't you know, is this the way to Westminster Abbey, what?"

"The bobble gave him a scornful look.

"Ja, mein herr," he said curtly; "ja."

True to Nature.

Mr. Sopper—When I discovered how late it was, believe me, I made for home like a streak of lightning.

Friend (maliciously)—Yes, zig-zagging, as it were.

The Kitchen Cabinet

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"Life is not a cup to be drained but an offering to be poured out."

HELPS FOR THE HOUSEWIFE.

Chili sauce may be prepared any time during the year with a few canned tomatoes, adding such spices, chopped pepper and onions as suits the taste. When preparing catsup or chili sauce for winter in large quantities, put the tomatoes through the meat chopper and use the juice, canned, for soup.

The old can rubbers together in the form of a mat to use to save the enamel of the sink, when using dish pans and drainers. These mats are also good to use on ice to keep dishes from slipping.

Place small rings on the inside hem of the curtains in bedrooms, have small hooks on the side of the casement; the curtains may be hung by the rings at night, securing better ventilation and saving the blowing of the curtains. These hooks and rings will be found useful to hang up the curtains when sweeping the room.

When bleaching clothes, as soon as dry turn the hose on them, then let the sun dry; the repeated wetting and drying will bleach cloth much sooner than the old manner.

Baskets and mats of sweet grass may be restored to fragrance by a quick dipping of the article into boiling water.

Wood, such as posts, stakes or trellises which must be driven into the ground, will last twice as long if the surface is charred by fire.

Make the candy for the children at home and save the price of one pound of candy, having three of home-made.

To Fill Cracks—Soak newspaper in a paste made by using one-half pound of flour, one-half pound of alum, and three quarts of water. Mix well and boil. It should be as thick as putty when it is ready to use. Force it into cracks in floors, wainscoting or other cracks. It hardens like papier mache and fills permanently any cracks.

He that has character need have no fear of his condition. Character will draw condition after it. — H. W. Beecher.

SOME MAIN DISHES.

Here are a few dishes, some of which may be used as the main dish for the meal.

Mexican Ham.—Take a slice of ham cut twice as thick as that used for ordinary frying, rub a small teaspoonful of mustard into its

surface with a tablespoonful of brown sugar. Lay this in the bottom of a large casserole or baking pan. Pare and slice thin sufficient potatoes for the family. Cover the ham to the depth of two or three inches. Dot with bits of butter unless the ham has plenty of fat on the edges. Sprinkle with pepper and cover with milk as you would prepare encaloped potatoes. Bake in a moderate oven for two hours. The ham will be tender and delicious and can be cut with a fork; the potatoes will be seasoned to a turn and the family has a one-dish dinner which will serve, if the family is small, for two meals.

Those who have prepared them say that dried fruits make more delicious butters than the fresh fruit. For apple butter take the dried apples, washed and soaked over night in cider or water, then cook them in the same liquid until tender. A fireless cooker is a good place to cook it in. Add about one-third of the bulk in sugar. Cook as thick as desired; more sugar may be added if liked sweeter. A delightful change is made in blending different flavors such as apricots and apples, using two-thirds the quantity of apple to one-third of apricots.

Cottage Cheese Pie.—Melt two tablespoonfuls of butter; in it cook two tablespoonfuls of cornstarch and one-half teaspoonful of salt; add two-thirds of a cupful of honey or sugar, one cupful of cottage cheese pressed through a ricer, the yolks of three eggs beaten light, the grated rind of a lemon or orange; mix thoroughly and turn into a pastry lined plate in the same manner as for custard pie. Bake until firm. Beat the whites of three eggs light, add four tablespoonfuls of sugar and spread the meringue over the pie. Dredge with a teaspoonful of sugar and let cool in a moderate oven until the meringue is lightly tinted. Serve the same day it is made.

Nellie Maxwell